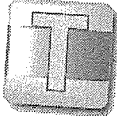


GOOD GOVERNMENT

Henry Waxman



There is a desperate need in Washington for more oversight, transparency and accountability. The checks and balances of our Constitution don't work when the White House and the Congressional leadership work together to shield government corruption and abuse from scrutiny.

The past five years of one-party rule have produced one of the greatest concentrations of power in America's history. The Republican-controlled Congress has ceased to function as an independent branch of government. Genuine legislative debate has vanished. Congressional committees rarely exercise their oversight responsibilities.

The consequences have been disastrous. Congress never held hearings that challenged the White House's distortion of intelligence in its rush to war in Iraq. Congress never questioned the President's reckless fiscal policies. And Congress never protested when Administration cronies

were installed as heads of essential federal agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Not surprisingly, the disappearance of oversight and accountability has been an invitation to corruption. A growing list of Washington Republicans, from lobbyists to members of Congress to the Vice President's chief of staff, are either under indictment or under investigation for shake-downs, bribery and other crimes.

Fortunately, there is an agenda that will promote core American values and revive the nation's faith in government. Democrats on the House Committee on Government Reform have introduced legislation that would restore open government, block political cronies from being appointed to essential public health and safety positions, prohibit government spending on covert propaganda and stop the growing politicization of science.

Our Hurricane Katrina Accountability and Contracting Reform Act would ban "monopoly contracts" used to shield politically well-connected companies from price competition in government contracts, and it would stop the revolving door between government and industry that has

created billions in wasteful spending. Our Open Government bill would bring back the old-fashioned idea that government information belongs to the public; it would halt the proliferation of pseudo-classifications like "For Official Use Only" and "Sensitive but Unclassified" that the Bush Administration has used to hide embarrassing facts.

Unfortunately, the public has heard virtually nothing about these proposals. The Republicans running Congress have kept them bottled up so effectively that not one single piece of the Democratic good-government agenda has been brought up for a vote in the House.

While each week brings to light new evidence of corruption, subterfuge and wasteful spending, there are many well-developed proposals for change waiting for a fair chance to be enacted. They will get that fair chance if Americans elect a Democratic Congress in 2006 and send a signal that they want honesty and accountability restored to government.

Henry Waxman, ranking Democrat on the Committee on Government Reform, has represented California's 30th District since 1975.